



Dear Parents and Guardians,

We hope that your families are safe and healthy during this unpredictable and unprecedented time. COCA strives to give children the tools that they need to prevent child abuse and bullying where they live, learn, and grow. Many of the classroom presentations that COCA had scheduled for this spring are postponed until further notice due to COVID-19.

COCA wants to take this opportunity to provide information for families as they learn remotely. Enclosed, you will find information on child abuse and bullying for parents to consider as well as suggested reading and activities for students. We hope that this information is useful and beneficial to your family.

If there are questions or concerns, COCA can be reached at (513) 684-7976 or questions can be directed to Prevention Education Specialist, Kahvah Whittaker, at Kahvah.whittaker@cocachild.org.

Sincerely,

The COCA Team

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse and neglect are ongoing patterns of maltreatment that have a harmful effect on the well-being of a child. Child maltreatment includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, and neglect. The effects of child maltreatment on children can be significant. Research shows that child maltreatment can cause problems such as neurological damage, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, school adjustment problems, and poor academic performance.

PHYSICAL ABUSE: Physical abuse is the non-accidental, physical injury or cruelty to a child. It includes the use of physical means to vent an adult's anger with no intent to appropriately discipline, and physical discipline out of proportion to the offense. Often, physical abuse results in a mark, such a bruise or laceration, on the child's body. Severe beatings, slapping, punching, biting, kicking, use of objects for striking, burning, shaking and strangulating are forms of physical abuse.

VERBAL ABUSE: Verbal abuse is the use of insulting, coarse or obscene language constantly used to humiliate a child and undermine his/her self-esteem.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE: All forms of abuse are ultimately emotionally damaging, but it is possible to be an emotional abuser without engaging in other forms of abuse. Emotional abuse includes chronic acts or omissions, which interfere with a child's psychological and social growth and development. Continuous criticizing, shaming, name-calling, blaming, making excessive demands, threatening severe punishment are all examples of emotional abuse. Additionally, exposure to family/domestic violence is also considered child abuse, and falls under emotional abuse.

SEXUAL ABUSE: Sexual abuse is when an adult or an older child forces sexual contact on a child under age 18. It includes touching, fondling, and penetration. Sexual abusers may use bribes, threats, physical force, or take advantage of a child's lack of knowledge. Sexual abuse includes: using children in the making of pornographic materials; forced exposure to sexual activity; passively allowing a child to be exploited or used sexually; actively engaging children in sexual activities ranging from exhibitionism, to fondling, to intercourse.

CHILD NEGLECT: Child neglect is the failure to meet the requirements basic to a child's physical development, the failure to provide necessary support and affection for a child's psychological and social development, the failure to provide appropriate supervision, and the failure to ensure that a child has an opportunity to learn in a school or home environment.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Why Should You Report?

First and foremost to protect the child. The intent of the reporting law is not to hurt or to punish; it is to get help to children and families in need. All of us have a stake in the protection of children.

Infants and young children cannot speak for themselves. Often older children are afraid to use the protection of the law and need others to act for them. Parents who maltreat their children do not voluntarily request services.

Who Should Report?

Anyone who has reason to believe a child is being abuse or neglected! All of us have a responsibility to report a child we suspect may be in danger. Ohio law encourages everyone to act on behalf of children in need of protection and to report suspicions to the appropriate authorities.

Certain Professionals, identified in **Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code**, are mandated to report any child they suspect may be, or is at risk of being, abused or neglected. Those required to report suspected child abuse and neglect include:

- Attorneys
- Physicians, hospitals interns, residents
- Speech pathologists
- Audiologists
- Practitioners of a limited branch of medicine or surgery as defined in R.C. 4731.15
- Children's Services Workers
- Psychologists
- Other Health Care Professionals
- Clergy
- School Authorities
- Child-Care Agency Employees
- Coroners
- School Employees
- School Teachers
- Professional Counselors
- Social Workers
- Nurses

Reporting

A report can be made by telephone, in person, or in writing to the Children's Services Agency in the county in which the child lives or was abused or to a law enforcement agency.

In Hamilton County:

Children's Services Division
Department of Job and Family Services
222 East Central Parkway
Cincinnati, OH 45202
24-Hour Reporting Number: **513-241-KIDS (5437)**

What Should You Report?

You should report any child under 18 years of age, or physically or mentally handicapped child under 21, who you have reason to believe has suffered any wound, injury, disability or condition of such a nature as to indicate abuse or neglect. It is important to note that you need only suspect—have reason to believe—that abuse or neglect is occurring. Physical proof or other forms of validation are not required. It is the responsibility of the children's services agency, through its investigation, to determine if abuse or neglect is in fact occurring.

What information should you give?

- Name and address of the child you suspect is being abused or neglected
- Age of the child
- Name and address of the parent or caregiver of the child
- Name of the person you suspect is abusing or neglecting the child
- Reason you suspect the child is being abused or neglected
- Any additional information you have about the family, such as other children in the home and ages of the children, child's behavior, and parental capacities

It is helpful if you provide as much of this information as you can. You should not hesitate to report if you do not have all the information. We must at least have a description and location of the child. Any uncertainty regarding whether to report should be resolved in favor of the child's protection.

You can choose to remain anonymous, or choose to give your name.

Mandated reporters can request the following information if they leave their name, address and telephone number:

- Whether Hamilton County Department of Job and Family Services (HCJFS) has initiated an investigation of the report.
- Whether HCJFS is continuing to investigate the report.

- Whether HCJFS is otherwise involved with the child who is the subject of the report.
- The general status of the health and safety of the child who is the subject of the report.
- Whether the report has resulted in filing a complaint in Juvenile Court or of criminal charges in another court by law enforcement officials.

Confidentiality

A report of suspected child abuse and neglect is confidential. Your identity will not be released or affirmed to anyone without your written consent, except through court process. Be aware that the reporter's identity may be guessed by the parent; again, your identity is never affirmed. You are also protected from civil or criminal liability. By law, anyone participating in good faith in making a report is immune from any civil or criminal liability.

For questions about reporting child abuse and neglect, or about how to report in your area, contact the Council on Child Abuse at 513-684-7976.

Is My Child Being Bullied?

In recent years, “bullying” has become a hot button word that parents have several concerns and opinions on. Bullying behavior in children and adolescents is **deliberate** and **repeated** mistreatment toward a peer or group of peers.

Bullying can take many different forms. Some types of bullying are more obvious and easy to identify while others are more subtle. Physical, Verbal, Sexual, Social, and Cyberbullying are the main categories of bullying that children experience.

Physical bullying - Physical bullying includes repeated hitting, kicking, punching, and pushing or damaging property.

Verbal bullying - Verbal bullying includes repeated name-calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, or homophobic or racist slurs.

Sexual Bullying- Sexual bullying includes repeated inappropriate touching or jokes. Sexual Bullying can also be is harassment that is connected to a person's sex, gender, sexual orientation or sexual activity.

Social bullying - Social bullying, is often harder to recognize and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. Social bullying includes repeated:

- Excluding or leaving someone out
- Spreading rumors
- Damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyberbullying- sending, posting, or sharing mean things online using computers, phones, tablets, and more. Cyberbullying can include repeated:

- Abusive or hurtful texts emails or posts, images or videos
- Deliberately excluding others online
- Gossip or rumors

Your child may be experiencing bullying if:

- Your child comes home with torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings
- Has unexplained cuts, bruises, and scratches
- Has few, if any friends, with whom he or she spends time
- Seems afraid of going to school, walking to and from school, riding the school bus, or taking part in organized activities with peers
- Obsession or withdrawal from electronic devices
- Has lost interest in school work or suddenly begins to do poorly in school
- Appears sad, moody, teary, or depressed when he or she comes home

- Complains frequently of headaches, stomachaches or other physical ailments
- Has trouble sleeping or has frequent bad dreams
- Experiences a loss of appetite
- Appears anxious and suffers from low self-esteem

Your child may hide the fact that they are experiencing bullying for many reasons. Some kids feel as though talking to parents about bullying could make their situation worse or cause stress for their parents.

If you suspect that your child is being bullied, it can be helpful to initiate a conversation that is less intimidating than asking, "Are you being bullied?" directly. Some examples of conversation starters include:

- "I've heard a lot about bullying in the news. Is that going on at your school?"
- "Do you have any best friends at school this year? Who are they? Who do you hang out with?"
- "Who do you sit with at lunch and on the bus?"
- "Are there any kids at school who you really don't like? Why don't you like them? Do they ever pick on you or leave you out of things?"

If your child tells you that they are experiencing bullying, it is very important to remain calm and reassure them that you are there to listen and help in any way that you can.

After speaking to your child about bullying, it may be helpful to talk to your child's teachers or other school personnel to get an idea of how your child interacts with their peers. Together, you can develop a plan for addressing the bullying that your child is facing at school.

Age-Appropriate Books About Bullying and Kindness to Read With Your Child

Ages 5-8

“What Does it Mean to Be Kind?” Rana DiOrio and Stephane Jorisch

“Llama Llama and the Bully Goat” by Anna Dewdney

“The Juice Box Bully” by Bob Sornson, Ph.D

“Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun” by Maria Dismundy

“We All Sing with the Same Voice” by J. Phillip Miller

“You, Me and Empathy” by Jayneen Sanders

Ages 9-12

“Restart” by Gordon Korman

“Hello, Universe” by Erin Entrada Kelly

“Save Me a Seat” by Gita Varadarajan

“Stand Up for Yourself & Your Friends: Dealing with Bullies & Bossiness and Finding a Better Way” by Patti Kelley Criswell

Ages 12-14

“Backlash” by Sarah Darer Littman

“Can’t Look Away” by Donna Cooner

“Bystander” by James Preller

“Jumped” by Rita Williams-Garcia

Age-Appropriate Books about Child Abuse, Body Safety and Trauma to Read With Your Child

Ages 5-8

“Your Body Belongs to You” by Cornelia Spellman

“Some Secrets Should Never be Kept” by Jayneen Sanders

“I Said No! A Kid-to-kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private” by Kimberly King

“Angryman” by Gro Dahle

“Somebody Cares: a Guide for Kids Who Have Experienced Neglect” by Susan Farber Straus

Ages 9-12

“Genesis Begins Again” by Alicia D. Williams

“Let's Talk about Body Boundaries, Consent & Respect” by Jayneen Sanders,

“Consent (for Kids): Boundaries, Respect, and Being In Charge of You” by Rachel Brian

Ages 12-14

“How Long Does It Hurt? A Guide to Recovering from Incest and Sexual Abuse for Teenagers, their Friends and their Families” by Cynthia L. Mather

“Invisible Girls: the Truth about Sexual Abuse” by Patti Feuerisen

“This Side of the Sky” by Marie-Francine Hébert

Links to Videos and Activities

Protect Yourself Rules

<https://fightchildabuse.org/protect-yourself-rules/grades-4-6/>

Stop the Secrets that Hurt

<https://fightchildabuse.org/stop-the-secrets-that-hurt/>

Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center

<https://www.pacer.org/bullying/classroom/elementary/united-video-series.asp>

Pacer Center's Kids against Bullying

<https://www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org/>

McGruff the Crime Dog Games

<http://www.mcgruff.org/>

The Family Safety Toolkit: Safer, Smarter Families

<https://safersmarterfamilies.org/>